

# THE CORRESPONDENT.

*Magna est Veritas et Prevalebit.*

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

MOSES, JESUS AND MAHOMET.

(Continued from our last.)

The preceding remarks are the most that we can say of the three celebrated legislators, whose religions have subjugated the greatest part of the universe. They were neither more nor less than such as we have described them. It remains for our readers to examine whether they are worthy of their respect. To remove the errors with which their systems abound, let them read the following with a free and impartial mind :

*Palpable and evident truths.*—Moses, Jesus and Mahomet, being such as we have described, it is evident that it is not in their writings that we are to seek a correct idea of the divinity. The appearances and conferences of Moses and Mahomet, as well as the divine origin of Jesus, are the greatest impositions that have ever seen the light. God, or nature, or, if you choose, the conjunction of all beings, of all properties, and of all energies, is necessarily the efficient cause, and nothing distinct from the effect : he cannot be called good or evil, just or unjust, merciful or wicked. These are properties which can alone be attributed to man, and, consequently, God is as incapable of punishing as of rewarding. Their idea of rewards and punishments can alone seduce the ignorant, who cannot conceive of a simple being called God but under images which are by no means applicable to deity. Those who refer to

the understanding without confounding its operations with the imagination, and who have sufficient resolution to throw off the prejudices of childhood, are those only who can form a clear and distinct idea of God. They consider him as the origin of all beings, which he produces without distinction, not holding some preferable to others, and considering the production of man the same as that of a worm, or of the smallest plant.

We ought not to believe that the universal being has more care of a man than of an insect ; or of a lion, more than of a stone ; that to him nothing is either beautiful or ugly, good or bad, perfect or imperfect.—That it does not concern him to be praised, prayed to, sought after, nor caressed ; that what men say or do does not change him ; that he is not susceptible of love or hate : in one word, that he has the same care for man that he has for all other creatures whatever may be their natures. Those distinctions which have been made are no more than the inventions of a limited understanding, imagined by ignorance, and cherished by self-love. No reasonable man can believe in the existence of God, nor hell, nor spirits, nor devils, in the manner which he has been taught to believe them : all these are but words of no consequence, invented only to blind and intimidate the people.

The infinity of stars which revolve around us, has given occasion to admit an equal number of solid

bodies which move themselves, among which has been placed the celestial court, and in which it is conjectured that God is located, like a king in the midst of his courtiers. This situation is the mansion of the happy, and here it is pretended that the good souls go to reside when they are separated from their respective bodies. But without being detained with a question so frivolous, to which no man who reasons can give his assent, it is indubitable that that which is called heaven is nothing else than a continuation of the air which surrounds us—a fluid in which the planets move without being sustained by any solid mass, as is equally the case with the earth which we inhabit.—As heaven was imagined, which was the habitation of God and the blessed, (or according to the pagans, of the gods and goddesses) a hell or subterranean place was invented, to which it was affirmed the souls of the wicked descended to be tormented; but the word hell, in its strict sense, expresses nothing else but a low and deep situation, described by the poets (or prophets) in opposition to the mansion of the heavenly inhabitants, which they supposed was high and elevated. This is exactly the signification of the word *infernus* among the Latins, or the *adus* of the Greeks; that is to say, a dismal situation, such as a sepulchre, or some other place deep and terrible for its obscurity. What is related concerning it, is solely the effect of the imagination of the poets, and of the fraud of priests.—The writings of the former are dressed and fitted to make an impression on weak, timid, and melancholy minds, and were converted into articles of faith by those whose principal interest it was to support and cherish a belief in such chimeras.

#### OF THE SOUL.

The soul is rather a more delicate subject to treat of than heaven or hell. It would perhaps be proper, in order to satisfy the curiosity of our readers, to speak of it with more extension; but before passing to a definition, we must examine what the most celebrated philosophers have thought of it. This we shall do in the fewest words, in order that it may be remembered with the greater ease. Some have pretended that the soul is a spirit, or immaterial substance; others that it is a portion of the divinity. These think it may be a very subtle air; those that it is a union of all the parts of the body. Others affirm that it is the finest part of the blood, which is ramified or separated in the brain, and is thence distributed by the nerves. On this supposition, the origin of the soul is in the heart, where it is engendered; and the part where it exercises its noblest functions is the brain; it being supposed that it is there mostly purged of the gross particles of the blood. Such are the different opinions which have been held concerning the soul. Nevertheless, the better to develop them, we shall divide them into two classes: one comprehending the philosophers who have believed it corporeal or material, and the other those who have considered it incorporeal or immaterial.

Pythagoras and Plato (300 years B. C.) thought that the soul was incorporeal, a being capable of subsisting without a body, and to move by itself. They pretended besides, that the individual souls of all animals are universal portions of the soul of the world; that these portions are incorporeal and immortal, or of the same nature as that whence they proceed, in the same way as flame is of the same nature as the fire whence it proceeds. These

philosophers believed that the universe was animated by an immaterial substance, immortal and invisible ; that it knew every thing ; that it operated continually, and was the cause of all motion, and the origin of all souls, which are but emanations from it. But as these souls are most pure and infinitely superior to the body, they are not united, say they, immediately, but through the medium of a body as subtle as flame, or that thin and extensive air, commonly called heaven. Thus taking possession of a body yet less subtle, and proceeding so gradually until they could unite themselves with the sensible bodies of animals, they descended to them as to a ditch or sepulchre. The death of the body, according to them, is the life of the soul which reposes during our life, as if it lay obscured, and then exercising weakly its most noble functions. Thus by the death of the body, the soul abandons its prison, is disengaged from matter, and goes to be re-united to the soul of the world, from which it emanated. So that according to this opinion, the souls of all animals are of an equal nature, and the diversity of its functions or faculties proceeds solely from the bodies through which they have to pass.

Aristotle (347 years B. C.) admitted one universal intelligence common to all beings, and that it has the same relation to individual intelligences which the light has to the eyes, and as the light makes objects visible, so the universal understanding makes those objects intelligible. This philosopher defines the soul that which enables us to live, perceive, conceive and move ; but does not say what the being is, or what is the origin and principle of its noble functions ; and consequently it is not in his writings that we must seek

a solution of the doubts which exist concerning the nature of the soul.

Disceanelius, Aselepiades (350 years B. C.) and Galen (160 years A. C.) believed that the soul was incorporeal ; but they asserted that it was nothing else than the union of all parts of the body, the result of the exact composition of the elements and of the disposition of the parts of the humours and the spirits. Thus, they said, as the health is not an intelligent part of that which is healthy, however it really exists in it, so the soul, however it may exist in an animal, is not one of its parts ; but the union of all those of which it is composed.

From what has been noticed of these authors, it appears that they believed the soul was incorporeal ; but they believed it under a principle entirely opposed to its intention ; because to say that it is not corporeal, but a thing inseparably united to the body, is to assert that it is corporeal ; since that which is called body is not only that which it is, but all that which is formed by accident of it ; and all which cannot be separated from matter.

Thus far of philosophers who maintained that the soul is incorporeal or immaterial. It is plain that they do not agree among themselves, and consequently do not deserve to be confided in. We come now to those who have conceded it incorporeal or immaterial.

Diogenese, (350 years B. C.) believed that the soul was composed of air, from which arose the necessity of respiration, and has defined it an air which passes from the mouth to the lungs, and from thence immediately is distributed through the whole body. Lenciphus (428 years B. C.) and Democritus (460 years B. C.) said that it was fire, and that like it, it was composed of atoms



which easily penetrated and moved all parts of the body. Hippocrates (460 years B. C.) said that it was composed of fire and water; Empedocles (400 years B. C.) of the four elements. Epicurus believed with Demosthenes, that the soul was composed of fire; but added that there entered into its composition air, a vapour, and another substance which had no name, and which is the principle of perception; that from these four different substances result a spirit extremely subtle, which is dispersed through the body, and which ought to be called soul. Descartes (1633,) maintained (but miserably) that the soul is not material; I say miserably, because never was there a philosopher that reasoned on this point so badly as this great man. Let us see how it is explained: "Suppose," says he, "that any one should doubt of the existence of his body, believe that he had none, and then talk in this manner: I have no body; I am nobody, notwithstanding I exist; consequently I cannot be any thing but a substance that thinks." Such reasoning destroys itself at once, nevertheless, I will give in two words my opinion.

1st. The doubt that Descartes proposes, is totally impossible, for although it is sometimes thought there are no bodies, it is nevertheless very certain that they exist, since they are thought of.

2d. Whoever believes that he has no body, ought to be assured that it does not exist, and no one can doubt of himself and if he is convinced he does not exist, his doubt is useless.

3d. When it is said that the soul is a substance which thinks, he tells us nothing new, since in this all agree. The difficulty is to determine what that substance is that thinks, and it is that which he has not explained with any more clearness

than those who have hitherto treated on the subject. But not to stray, as Descartes has expressed it, & to conceive the most perfect idea which may be formed of the soul of all animals, (without excepting man, who is of the same nature, and who only exercises different functions by reason of the diversity of his organs and tumours) attention should be paid to the following: It is indubitable that there exists in the universe a fluid extremely subtle, or a material much diluted and in continual motion, whose origin is in the sun; and the rest more or less spread thro' other bodies, according to their nature or consistence.— Here we see what is the soul of the world; here we see that which governs and vivifies it, and from any one part is distributed through all the component parts. This soul is the purest fire which the universe possesses. It does not kindle by itself, but through the medium of different motions that it gives to the particles of the bodies which it enters, it burns and makes sensible its heat.— The visible fire contains a greater quantity of this material than the air; this more than water, and the earth much less than both: plants contain more than minerals, and animals much more than either. Finally, this fire contained in the body, produces sensation, and is that which is called soul, or animal, or vital spirits, which are dispersed through all parts of the body. Therefore it is certain that this soul being of equal nature in all animals, is dissipated in the same manner, by death in man and beast. Whence it is deduced that what poets and theologians have told us respecting another world, is a pure chimera, invented and disseminated by them for reasons which it is not difficult to divine.

(To be continued.)

For the Correspondent.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY ; OR,  
TRUTH DRAWN FROM FABLES.

CHAPTER II.

(Continued from our last.)

Having thus shewn that long before the existence of the Christian religion as a separate and distinct sect, all the dogmas of it made an essential part of more ancient religions professed in the countries in which Christianity made its first appearance ; and by those sects of Jews as had adopted part of the religion of Zoroaster, and the doctrines and precepts of Pythagoras and Plato, we shall now proceed to compare the Jesus of the Christians with other more ancient symbolical gods of Paganism, whose supposed birth, life, death and resurrection, as well as divine origin, exactly coincide with the Christ of the Nazarene sect.

LEGEND OF JESUS, CALLED THE  
CHRIST.

Jesus is a man-god, the son of God or an emanation of the divinity, or second person of the trinity ; he is the messiah, Christ, or mediator, and the Saviour and deliverer of mankind from the evil introduced into the world by the serpent or malignant principle that tempted the woman and man in paradise, where God had placed them. He was born the 25th December at midnight, on the winter solstice, of a *virgin overshadowed by the sun*, called Maria, the daughter of Arma ; his mother was *full of grace*, and is a *source of light* ; she had the sun above her head and the moon at her feet. He was born in a stable in the midst of animals, such as an ox, an ass, and was placed in a manger, and adored by the shepherds. A little while after his birth he was likewise adored by the wise men of the east, (Magi or followers of Zoroaster) who offered him myrrh,

frankincense, and gold ; they were led by *his star* which they saw in the east. A tyrant (Herod) attempted to take away his life while an infant, and ordered the slaying of all the children, for fear of being deprived of his crown by the child, as had been predicted by the prophets. He escaped by flying into Egypt, whence he returned after the death of Herod. Nothing more is mentioned of his life until the age of 12 years, when he is said to have disappeared from his parents, and to have been *strong in spirit, filled with wisdom*, and the *grace of God upon him*. After this period, nothing is related of him till about three months previous to his death, during which time he preached, performed numerous miracles, changed water into wine, and after being contemned, persecuted, and publicly accused as a disturber of the peace and as an impostor, he was put to death on a cross between two robbers, the one on his right, a repenting sinner, whom he invited to heaven, and the other, on the left, a profligate and unrepenting wretch. The devil tempted him and seduced his enemies to put him to death. He was transfigured on the top of a mountain, and his raiment and face were shining and white as snow. His mother stood at the foot of the cross, (or a little way from it) ; he descended to hell, where he remained two days, and rose from the dead and ascended to heaven on the third day at the dawn ; that being the next day to the Jewish sabbath, or on Sunday, at the vernal equinox. His resurrection was primitively fixed on the 25th of March. The conception of Mary took place nine months previous to the 25th of December, and about the same epoch of the vernal equinox. He is the *lamb* that came to save mankind and to destroy sin and *darkness*. He is the *Lion* of

the tribe of Juda, and the messiah promised to the Jews by Jehovah and his prophets. His name is Jesus, and his epithet in Greek *Christos*. On his execution he wore a purple robe and a crown of thorns; while on the cross he was wounded with a spear on his left side. He foretold the approaching destruction of the world, and the coming of the new Jerusalem or celestial city. He said he would drink of the next wine with his apostles in heaven. He had twelve apostles or constant attendants. His death is celebrated by ceremonies of sorrow, by mourning and darkness; and his resurrection, by demonstrations of joy and jubilation, and the returning light is celebrated at the vernal equinox or at easter. His birth is a day of festivity and rejoicing, and is celebrated at midnight on the 25th of December, at the winter solstice, when the days are about to increase and the nights to diminish.

The principal sacraments of the Christian religion are: Baptism, confession, consecration of the bread and wine, confirmation, unction or chrism.

#### ANCIENT LEGENDS ANTERIOR TO CHRISTIANITY.

According to Zoroaster, Ormued, or the principle of light and the source of good, created a paradise, called Eiren, where man enjoyed perfect happiness, but Ahriman, or the bad principle the source of darkness created the great serpent, who brought evil and death on the world. To counteract the influence of the bad principle, an emanation of Ormued or the supreme light was sent to the world, under the name of Mithra, Messites or Mediator, to combat Ahriman and save mankind. To obtain this end, the Mithra of the Magi, like the Osiris and Bacchus of the Egyptians, (all signifying the

sun) is born of a virgin, (Isis, Ceres or the moon, or the virgin adored at Sais and mother of the sun,) he is put to death by Typhon or the evil principle, descends into Hell, rises again, and ascends triumphant to the celestial regions. The same thing, with little difference, is told of Adonis, Atys, and Serapis. They all work numberless miracles, are persecuted, put to death and rise again from the dead. Serapis is represented with a cross by him, and wears one on his breast, and around his head the rays of his crown cross one another. Adonis and Atys are represented attached to a tree, of which small portions were cut and distributed to the adepts, as is done with the pretended cross on which Jesus is said to have been executed. Isis, in the Egyptian monuments, is often represented with an infant in one of her hands, and with a circular handle in the other terminated by a cross; an emblem repeated every where in the Egyptian hieroglyphics, and which we know means the crossing of the equator by the sun at the equinoxes and solstices, and figuratively signifies life or futurity. When, on the demolition of the temple of Serapis, at Alexandria in Egypt, in the early ages of Christianity, crosses were found in the tomb of Serapis, the ignorant Christians took them for the gibbet of Jesus. The child held in the arms of the virgin goddess adored at Sais, and which the Egyptian priests exhibited every year to the people on the day of the winter solstice, corresponding to our christmas, bore an inscription, which, according to Macrobius, signified: "The child to whom I have given birth, is the sun." It was by the Egyptians named Horus or the infant sun; and from this word came the term Hour or *Hora* in Latin and Greek. Mithra, the sun, and Jesus Christ were



equally born on the 25th of December. We read in the Roman Calendar used still in the time of Constantine, on the 8th before the kalends of January, which corresponds to the 25th of December—*Natalis Invicti*. Nativity of the Invincible; and we know from many authorities, that this *Invincible* was Mithra, Osiris, or the sun. Mithra in many of his images was designated thus—*Deo Soli invicto Mithrae*. Creeshna, or the Incarnated Vischnu, is likewise born on the same day. Mithra, Bacchus, and Jupiter, like Jesus, were born in a stable or cavern. The Magi are the adorers of Mithra; and gold, frankincense and myrrh are precisely the things consecrated to the sun by the ancient astrologers of Persia. A star from the east (or the eastern sun) is their guide, and they call it the star of Jesus; which evidently means the rising sun at the vernal equinox. Hence is derived the German word *Ostern* from which comes the English Easter; Jesus is said to be *the light that illuminates all men, that descended from Heaven, and that comes from the east*.

Let us hear Cedrenus on this subject. "The 25th of March the angel Gabriel appears to Mary and announces her conception of the Saviour." It is in the same month that Osiris in the Egyptian mythology fecundates Isis. "It is on the same day, adds Cerenus, that our Saviour, after having terminated his life, rose from the dead; and this our ancient fathers called the passage or pass-over of the Saviour." So that from the time of the conception of the virgin to the death of Jesus, exactly a year elapses; and that is precisely the course or life of the sun from one vernal equinox to the next.

It was exactly on the same day at the vernal equinox that the Egyptians celebrated the resurrection of

Osiris, the Phœnician that of Adonis; the Phrygians that of Atys; the Persians the festivity of the Neurone, or their new year beginning in the spring,—a custom which subsists to the present day. Lastly, all these feasts coincided with the Hilanae, or feasts of rejoicing of the Romans. They were preceded by some days of mourning and by funeral ceremonies, in which the priests of Mithra, of Osiris, of Adonis, carried an image covered with black crape, which they placed in a tomb, and then began to bewail the death of the God in lamentable strain, and giving every mark of grief. They next proceeded to celebrate his resurrection with the greatest demonstrations of joy; and to the darkness of the temple and the accents of sorrow, succeeded the new light, and hymns of exultation. The priest exclaimed: "Let your sorrows cease, sacred host of initiated adepts, your God is resuscitated; and his sufferings and pains will serve to save you." Firmicus, a Christian writer, has transmitted these particulars; and St. Justin, Tertullian, Origen and the most learned among the Christian fathers acknowledge the perfect resemblance between the ancient mysteries and the Christian ones; but they attribute this similarity to the Devil, who thus attempted by anticipation to discredit the future religion, which he so much dreaded! Tertullian charges the Devil with having caused so great a conformity to exist between the mysteries and the sacraments of Christianity and those of more ancient religions. He acknowledges with all other writers, that the Mithriacs baptised and gave at the same time a name to their children; that the people confessed their sins to the priests, from whom they received absolution; that they consecrated the bread by employing mystical words

similar to those of the Lord's supper, and emblematical of resurrection; that the initiated were only admitted after rigorous trials, and were marked on the forehead with a particular sign and anointed; that they believed in the resurrection, were presented with crowns like those of the martyrs, respected chastity, and had convents of chaste nuns. According to the learned Hyde, in his work on the Religion of the Ancient Persians, we find that they baptised their children, and named them as we do our children when christened; that they admitted good and bad angels, a paradise and a hell, and that more than 3000 years ago, they had a hierarchy of priesthood exactly resembling that of the Christian church. Hyde does not attribute this to the Devil, but to providence, who, says he, ordained that the Persians should by anticipation do that which in later times was to be adopted by the Christians. Such a flimsy way of accounting for the plainest facts, when they overturn a favorite system, sufficiently evinces the frail basis on which Christianity stands, and the blindness or hypocrisy of its defenders, even among the most learned; for great learning and great credulity are by no means incompatible.

(To be Continued.)

For the Correspondent.

#### VICARIOUS ATONEMENT.

Sir: Not having before my eyes that fear of the Lord (or the Devil) which prostrates my reason at the shrine of *faith*, and regardless of that awful threat in the New Testament of "believe or be damned," nor yet acknowledging the justice of the conclusion, that he who shuts his eyes will thereby see more clearly, I have ventured once more to present my plain common sense obser-

vations, to your plain common sense readers.

My experience has long taught me to defend a good conscience, not only as the best guarantee to my present peace, but, if there is a future existence, as the surest foundation of felicity hereafter. If, however, I am mistaken in this first article in my creed, I cannot but believe, that our judge above, even should he deny me the reward which my endeavors claim, will not, certainly, inflict punishment for this scrupulous regard to the monitor within me. I am led to this conclusion, both from God's mercy and justice. Indeed, I could never find it in my heart, to conceive the supreme ruler of the universe either *unjust* or a *tyrant*. In addition to this, I cannot consent that he needs to be told either of our wants or of our fallible natures; and however unpleasant it may sound in the ears of hireling priests, I shall never pay a cent for *their* intercession, nor do I pay any respect to the hypothesis on which their assumed *embassy* is founded, that God sent his son to sojourn among us, for the purpose of becoming *better acquainted* with our frailties, so that he might become a more efficient intercessor for us before the throne of *his own* justice; or that he assumed our nature and became subject to all the ills of life, that he might thereby *the better feel* how much we poor mortals were to be pitied. No, sir, I believe no such thing, the scripture to the contrary notwithstanding. That God did, however, send his only *begotten* son to this world, for this and other purposes, just about as well accounted for by the pious, is continually resounded from the pulpit, that common sanctuary of deceit and dullness. It would be well for the world if this



religious absurdity stood forth alone. On the contrary, however, the scriptures are full of sketches of God's character as false and disgraceful as this. Almost all the Jewish part of those writings, place God very much on the level with some young man in his nonage; but perhaps more like some testy old man in his dotage: witness all the pretended conversations of this same deity, from Genesis to Job, inclusive. If on some occasions we are at a loss to determine whether the *creator* or the *creature* exhibit greater signs of wisdom, this is not always the case.—Not only in many instances are we obliged to perceive, that the writers of those books array the strongest reasons on the wrong side, but, in others, God himself is made to bind his *eternal* purposes to the suggestions of clay. Moses has more than once the advantage of his God, and in no instance, perhaps, does his politic council, his humanity, and moderation appear more to the disparagement of his deity, than in those two instances to be found in Exodus, chap. 32, v. 11, 12, 13, 14, and Numbers, chap. 14, from verse 11 to 20, where he averts the most fearful denunciation of utter destruction against the wretched, poor, and ignorant multitude, whom any *good man* might pity, but could feel no wish to destroy; without, indeed, it should be for the purpose of freeing them from the inevitable distress of their situation. From such instances, and hundreds of others which might be noticed in scripture, we might fairly be led to infer, that the God of the Jews did really need some *well-informed* advocate to support and defend the cause of poor humanity—to soothe his anger and stay his too ready vengeance.

Christianity is built on this assumed theory of the *ignorance*,

*changeableness* and *ire* of God. But if Christianity may be considered unfortunate in this foundation, it certainly is not less so in that system of redemption which it has engrafted on the old testament, and of which it professes to be a part. Among the most prominent features of this system, and, indeed, on which the whole is based, is the fitness of *vicarious suffering*—the admissibility, or the acceptance in the eye of justice, of our personal responsibility for the crimes of another. The general practice in the Romish church, of receiving money for sin, is a modification of this monstrous doctrine of vicarious suffering, and full as well supported by any analogy to be drawn from the relative situation of the parties, as the system in the New Testament is, with reference to the relative condition of God and man. The doctrine of this kind of substitution is the offspring of a most barbarous age, and may be found in the usages of the aborigines of our own country; but should never have been permitted to disgrace either the reasoning or the religion of civilized life.

Justice is pictured blind, by which the *semi-barbarous* Christian would, perhaps, infer, that it was a part of her character to strike without discrimination and without remorse, the innocent as well as the guilty. But let us see how we can explain this with a better reference to our own feelings, and the humanity of the present age. Justice is painted blind only to denote, that in awarding punishment she should regard no extraneous circumstance of worth or greatness; and that in striking "for justice sake," her hand might not be unnerved by the deplorable condition of her victim, or turned aside by the bribes of the rich and the great. Justice is not of the nature

to accept of substitution in matters of a criminal nature ; at least, in so far as it may be viewed in instances where a satisfaction in money cannot be accepted, and when the "amend honorable" is inadmissible. It therefore follows, that she cannot *accept* such a substitution as the Christian system supposes, and mercy certainly will not require it ; or, if we turn the tables a little we might say, that when mercy shall demand it, then justice shall accept the offering of innocence for guilt. But, even here there is one difficulty to be surmounted. I cannot conceive by what mental progress the righteousness of another person thus offered as an atonement for transgression, can make good men of vicious ones. The people of the Friendly Isles were in the habit formerly of sacrificing human beings for the purpose of propitiating their Gods, especially in cases of war ; but they seemed to have stopped here in the proposed benefit of such a barbarous custom ; and never, so far as I have been able to discover, were guilty of the farther folly of believing that their morals were rendered more pure by it, or their manners more mild.

LOOKER-ON.

*Anecdote.*—A zealous parson in the state of steady habits, who noticed the remissness of one of his indigent parishioners in attending church, spoke to him on the subject, and in the common style of *holy impertinence*, chid him for his neglect. The pauper pleaded his want of shoes as an excuse. This, however, was far from being valid in the parson's mind, who felt a laudable pride in the number of his flock. "This will not do," said he, "I will lend you a pair, just for meeting." The indolent fellow accepted the shoes, but finding them very convenient in

other instances as well as travelling to the sanctuary, soon used them so hardly that it could not escape the notice of his heavenly guide. "How is this," said he, "I lent them to you only for the purpose of going to meeting." Lawrence scratched his head for an excuse. "Indeed, good Mr. Parson," said he, "as we are *both maintained by the town*, I thought it would make no odds which wore out the shoes, you or I."

L. O.

For the Correspondent.

#### SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY.

*Mr. Editor*—By the kindness of a friend, I have had an opportunity of seeing several numbers of the *Correspondent*, and am glad the advocates of reason have an opportunity of expressing their opinions through the press. In looking over one of the numbers, I perceive a Mr. Slater, in his speech on the anniversary of Mr. Paine's birth-day, said :—"His (Paine's) calumniators all profess themselves Christians, though they have no more regard for the Christian religion than the Emperor of China," &c. "Most assuredly they are no more assimilated with that *good man*, the founder of their system," &c. If I understand this gentleman, he means to say, that a Christian and a good man are synonymous, and that those who calumniate Mr. Paine, cannot, in reality, be Christians. If we must allow Mr. S's definition of a Christian, how many shall we find ? How many are there who do not only calumniate, but worse than that ? The community is composed of Christians ; and their fruits may be known by looking at our criminal calenders—the number of judges, magistrates, lawyers, constables, watchmen, &c. Is not the whole community bound by oaths, certificates, numerous laws,

&c. ? Is not every precaution possible adopted to make men honest ? And, after all, what frauds, perjuries, &c. are committed, unknown to the public ; or rather, never appear in a court of judicature ?

When I look at the words attributed to Jesus, I am not surprised that Mr. Paine, and all opposed to the Christian system, are calumniated. He says, "he that is not with us is against us." Does he not tell his disciples to shake even the very dust from their feet at those places where they are not received ? (Matth. x. 14, 15,) and that it shall be *more tolerable* for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the inhabitants of that city. He also (Matth. xi. 21, 24,) uses similar language to the inhabitants of Chorazin and Capernæum ; and for what are these judgments threatened ? merely because the inhabitants of these places did not believe (that which they could not believe,) his doctrine. Is it not evident from these texts—from the circumstance of driving the money-changers out of the temple, (a very improbable story, as he possessed no power in the temple !) and frequently using this language, "hypocrites," "fools," "blind-guides," "serpents," "generation of vipers," &c. that Jesus would have persecuted and established his doctrine by force, had he not been prevented by the Jews and Romans. But, as he could not punish on earth, he frequently threatened a more terrible punishment in *Hell*, notwithstanding he was "*meek and lowly of heart*." Have not all the crusades, inquisitions, massacres, burnings, and torturings, alternately by the Papists and Protestants, been produced by this spirit and this language ? And ought not Christians, agreeably to the language of their founder, to compel [he ordered his disciples to

use force—"compel them to come in,"] all those who are not Christians to become so, even though they cannot believe, and though it would deluge the world, as it has done for centuries, with blood. "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword." "For I am come (Matth. x. 34,) to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother," &c.

But to return to Mr. Slater,—if he is a Deist, he must believe the scriptures untrue ; he must also, for the same reason, deny the divinity of Jesus, as maintained by the high orthodox : "he that hath seen me hath seen the father." Jesus frequently asserts a superior power, either inherent or derived. If he did not possess this power, he must have told untruths ; if he did not tell the truth, now could he be a *good* man ? I will leave Mr. S. to settle this as he may. JULIAN.

*Philadelphia, March 18, 1827.*

For the Correspondent.

### SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

*Mr. Editor.*—Among the various plots and schemes that have been devised to bring man into a state of mental slavery, there is none that appears to be more effectual than that priestly contrivance called Sunday Schools. They are a mere clerical speculation. There is not an art nor science taught therein ; not even the rudiments of our own language. Such schools, if properly managed, might be useful to youths of suitable age ; but, as now constituted, they are nothing but seminaries of creeds, where parents send their children to compromise and forswear themselves before they know how to choose the good or refuse the evil. As long as the inventors and prosecutors of this selfish scheme carried it into



effect by persuasion, or even by fraud and deception, it might have passed almost unnoticed, and its exposure been comparatively of little consequence. But when children are forced to go to these schools, or parents impelled to send them there, it is time to inquire into the motives of their conductors. This is an imperative duty of a father as his own master, and the guardian of his own family.

Some clerical fuedatory may wish to know what I mean by *forcible* means? I answer, they are the taking the advantage of necessity and poverty to coerce people to a compliance with what they otherwise might not relish. I will further explain myself: there is a large manufacturing establishment on Long Island, where are employed a number of boys, from eight to thirteen years old, who are the sons of parents that are dependent on the labour of their children to aid in the support of their families. The head of this establishment is a *licensed Priest*, who holds forth the doctrine that all men are by nature morally and totally depraved, incapable of thinking a good thought or doing a good action; still left to the freedom of their own will and accountable for all their good and bad thoughts, words, and actions under a law that they cannot comprehend, and to which is annexed infinite penalties and rewards. This despotic Priest, (the true likeness of the major part of his craft,) lately decreed that all boys in the establishment, of which he is head, who did not go regularly to Sunday School, should be dismissed from employment. He issued his orders without consulting the parents: thus making himself the head of their families, and threatening to take from them their bread, if they did not yield im-

plicit obedience to his commands. This is an outrage on every principle of natural right and religious freedom, and deserves to be exposed and reprobated, the more so because there is not a branch of study taught in this school that can in the least accelerate the future advantage of its pupils. It is managed by the clergy or by church vassals, which they appoint. These are constantly filling the brains of their scholars with dark and obscene articles of faith, or with some mysterious passage of scripture which theologians themselves cannot understand. These the children must commit to memory, which furnishes constant employment for their tender minds all the week, and allows them no opportunity to study anything useful to themselves or to society.

These efforts to controul the infant mind, show clearly that it is not with *rational* men that the priesthood wish to have any intercourse, and that nothing would be more fatal to their power and influence than the diffusion of correct principles. Not satisfied with the immense revenues they get by preaching absurd doctrines to their adult hearers, they resort to the disgraceful practice of speculating with the human mind in its tenderest stage, by embarrassing it with the most unnatural prejudices, and withholding from it every source of useful information.

That theology has been the greatest impediment in all ages to the progress of knowledge, as well as to every branch of science, requires no proof. Even at the present day, all branches of study not closely connected with its contracted and rapacious principles, are repugnant to it. This is evident from their own acknowledgment. A few days ago, I noticed an article in the *New-Haven*

*Chronicle*, evidently from the pen of an orthodox theologian, complaining bitterly of the vices, and deploring the ignorance of the people in some parts of the United States. These calamitous evils the writer attributes to the credulous stupidity of their *Priests*, who, he says, are fond of history, admirers of morality, lovers of science, &c. Those *Priests*, adds the *Chronicle*, preach up the terrors of hell *only once a year*, and that with a great deal of reluctance.

Besides the absurdity of supposing that a man is rendered virtuous by terrifying him with hell fire, this writer, by supposing their wickedness to proceed from historical dissertations, or from moral and scientific lectures, has betrayed more ignorance than is to be found among those who are the objects of his declamations. That there are people in the United States who are ignorant and consequently vicious, I do not pretend to deny. But this proves nothing as to *reforming* them. In my opinion, children can only be made wise by the establishment of schools of more utility than Sunday schools; and virtuous, by other means than terror. Let them be taught to *think*, to exercise their *reasoning* faculties. Instead of placing in their hands books filled with incomprehensibles even to those who pretend to be their teachers; instead of labouring to impress their minds with dogmas about "a world of spirits," respecting which no correct idea ever has been, or ever can be formed, let them be familiarized with *realities*, with objects which their senses can reach, and in less than half the time they are now employed in acquiring what is called education, they will become intelligent, moral, and active citizens.

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## The Correspondent.

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*Magna est Veritas et Prevalebit.*

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NEW-YORK, MARCH 31, 1827.

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FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION.

This Association is zealously and steadily pursuing the objects originally contemplated. Its meetings, which are held on Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock, in the Academy, corner of Pearl street and Broadway, are numerous and respectable; and the lectures are listened to with the utmost attention. So rapid, indeed, has been the increase of the auditory of late, that it has become necessary to obtain a larger room than the one now occupied, for the accommodation of the members. This is also the more requisite as a number of ladies have expressed a wish to attend the lectures. When the arrangements are completed, due notice will be given in the *Correspondent*.

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### *Progress of Liberal Opinions.*—

We have great pleasure in announcing that Societies similar to the *New York Free Press Association*, are forming in different parts of the Union. In the eastern, western, and middle states, liberal principles are rapidly advancing; thus affording an undeniable proof that mankind are beginning to perceive it is more consistent with the character of rational beings, and more conducive to their interest, to judge for themselves in matters of religion, than to place implicit confidence in a mercenary and overbearing priesthood—From Boston, Philadelphia, Buffalo and Cincinnati, our information is such as to warrant a belief, that the sincere inquirers after truth in these cities will no longer be exposed, from the want of union, to the secret and

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invidious influence of bigots and fanatics, who hesitate at no means, however atrocious, to accomplish the ruin of all who do not subscribe to their sanguinary and senseless creeds.

Our correspondent in Cincinnati, under date the 2d March, informs us, that, in January last, an association was entered into there "for mutual instruction in Natural Science," the immediate objects of which are the delivery of lectures at stated periods, and, ultimately, "the establishment of a School for children, with the necessary apparatus, a Library, and a Printing Press."—A Constitution and By-laws have been framed, from which we give the following preamble:—"Experience has long since taught, that science, properly pursued, has eventuated in good to *Man*; has much enlarged the sources of his happiness, and meliorated the condition of society: That from the collision of opinions, *truth* has been elicited, while the mass of facts collected through the freedom of communication, has added to the store of general knowledge: That the study of NATURE is the only path to self-preservation, and "the proper study of mankind is man." Therefore our researches should be directed to Nature, the Social compact, and to ourselves; thus enlarging the sphere of our enjoyments, and establishing principles calculated to meliorate the condition of society—Such is the object of our Association, to be attained in the establishment of *Truth*, the fountain of *Justice*, the foundation of all real Knowledge."

As it is highly important that a reciprocal and frequent intercourse should be kept up between the liberal institutions in this country, the Editor of the *Correspondent*, as Secretary of the *New-York Free Press*

*Association*, will feel as great pride in being made the medium through which this intercourse may be promoted, as he is disposed, at all hazards, to advocate correct principles.

*Philosophical Library*.—Owing to unavoidable circumstances, the first part of this work will not be ready for delivery until the 4th of April, (Wednesday next,) when it will positively appear.

*To Correspondents*.—"Truth and Moral Excellence," and "Socrates" to "Robert Walsh," in our next.

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#### MISCELLANEOUS.

*Clerical Scurrility*.—The following very proper letter has appeared in the Colchester (Eng.) Gazette:—"To the Rev. Mr. Rede—Sir, It is very generally known, that on Sunday the 26th of November, at the parish church of St. Leonards, Colchester, you directed a portion of your discourse most pointedly and particularly against the theatre of this town; and that your zeal even carried you so far as to exhort your congregation on no account to visit the theatre—to associate with "*vagabonds, whoremongers, and prostitutes*." Should you have intended those epithets particularly or in part to apply to *our body*, it may, perhaps, be necessary for *your information* to state, that the profession of acting and that of preaching are *equally* recognized by the legislature, when practised by *authority* and ordination; therefore the term vagabond is as applicable to the *one* party as the *other*. And for the female portion of our community, their *known* respectability and propriety of conduct as wives, mothers, and daughters, are sufficient refutations of this unwarrantable and calumnious attack. Had we been informed that some puritanical



mummer had vomited forth such epithets, we should have treated it with contempt, by attributing it to the fanaticism of his sect; but when it is said of an orthodox minister, who is surely not warranted by his tenets in decrying the abuses of public amusements, and when it is remembered that the amusement alluded to receives not only the sanction but the countenance of the very head of the church, consequence is attached to the observations, and we feel called on, as men, husbands, and fathers, to treat it with most serious consideration. We deem it therefore necessary to inform you, that we have laid a statement of our grievances before the bishop of your diocese.

From the Members of the Norwich Company of Comedians.

*Theatre, Colchester, Dec. 4, 1826.*"

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*Rights of Women.*—By Moses's law it was permitted to fathers to sell their daughters, and to husbands to buy their wives and concubines. In such a system *the rights of man and wife could never be nor ever were, equal and reciprocal.* The different value, that the Mosaic dispensation attached to men and women is clearly evidenced in its enactments, on the subject of adultery and fornication. The property of a man in a woman seemed to form nearly the sole consideration in the eye of the law; and on this principle, the connection of a married man with a married woman was punished with death. The connection of a married man with a single woman was not punished with death. The connection of a married man with a *virgin betrothed* was punished with death. His connection with a *virgin* not betrothed was only punished with a fine and an obligation to take as his wife the person to whom he had done so heinous

an injury. Now this is clear proof that the Hebrew law, in accordance with the whole analogy of the first Jewish covenant, regarded not so much the violation of the woman's honour, as the invasion of the property of the man. When a woman was not the property of a man, then the law visited with slight severity either adultery or rape. Where by marriage or troth she had become the property of a man, then the violation of her chastity, or the voluntary surrender of it, became a capital crime. In the same spirit of almost conclusive regard to the husband, he was allowed a plurality of wives, and liberty to take slaves and concubines to his bed, whereas a similar liberty exercised by the wife was punished with her own death and the death of her paramour. With the same unequal distribution of marriage rights, the Mosaic law adjudged death to the bride, if she came not a virgin to the bridal bed—or, as Moses expresses it, if the tokens of her virginity were wanting. In the same partiality of provision, it accorded to the husband the awful trial of jealousy, in which the bitter water, by a miraculous virtue, "caused the thigh of the adulteress to swell and her belly to rot." And precisely in union with the spirit of these peculiar rights and privileges, the husband had a plenary power to divorce his wife on trivial pretexts; or, at least, on grounds far short of infidelity to his bed.

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*The Holy Alliance.*—In Rabbe's "Memoirs of Alexander," we find the following remarks respecting the Holy Alliance: "The source of this pact (la Sainte Alliance) was evidently a profound mystical pre-occupation on the part of Alexander.—Since 1814, the instructions and the

exhortations of Madame de Krudener had produced their effect. This celebrated prophetess had ably seized upon that which is always lively and ticklish (*de vivant et de chatouilleux*) in the heart of a king,—of that *proud weakness* which pleases him in the ideas of power and of domination. “Alexander,” said Madame de Krudener, “has received a mission to rebuild that which Napoleon had received a mission to destroy.—Alexander is the *white angel* of Europe and the world, as Napoleon was the *black angel* of the same.” This mysterious rivalry of two angels, or genii, of the epoch, was likely to seduce Alexander, by raising him to the height of an adversary, beneath whom he was truly forced to rank himself, according to the value of proportions adopted in the world of material realities. The moderation which the late autocrat demonstrated towards France about this period, is attributed, by some, to the influence of Madame de Krudener; and Mr. Rabbe says—“It is certain, at least, that she held, in two houses at Paris, *mysterious conferences*, at which the allied sovereigns were assembled. The idea of the Holy Alliance has, therefore, not unnaturally been ascribed to Madame de Krudener, who wished to *Christianise* the world, according to the principles of the primitive church, and who wished universal peace; objects which were only to be obtained by an alliance of the powerful ones of the age, cemented by religion. According to others, it was, on coming from a conversation with this extraordinary woman, “who had poured out her soul with an admirable eloquence, that the Emperor Alexander, seized with a religious philanthropic transport, engendered the project.”

*Apologies for doing wrong.*—It often occurs that persons guilty of iniquitous measures, apply some flattering unction to the stings of conscience. Butler, the witty writer of *Hudibras*, who seems to have studied human nature very deeply, puts into the mouths of the knight and his attendant many facetious palliations for their malpractices. As an extenuation for perjury, he brings in Ralphy to say—

“For if the devil to serve his turn,  
Can tell the truth, who the saints should scorn  
When it serves theirs, to swear and lie,  
I think there’s little reason why;  
Else he has a greater pow’r than they,  
Which ’twere impiety to say:  
We are not commanded to forbear  
Indefinitely at all to swear;  
But to swear idly, and in vain,  
Without self interest or gain:  
For breaking of an oath, or lying,  
Is but a kind of self-denying.”

And he causes the lawyer to use the following expressions, when consulted by the knight, as a justification for a similar crime:—

“For in all courts of justice here,  
A witness is not said to swear,  
But make an oath: that is, in plain terms,  
To forge whatever he affirms.”

Temures, a Christian general who promised the garrison of St. Sebastian, that if they would surrender, *no blood should be shed*; and when the garrison surrendered, and Temures buried them all alive, he no doubt consoled himself for the treachery in having completely fulfilled his engagement, the spirit of which he had so inhumanly and treacherously violated.

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